The Cream Producer
Burns & Co.

March, 1937.



## A GRAND OLD MAN

On Saturday, February 27th, the last of the grand old men of the West - the men who had pioneered the way for settlement - was laid at rest in Calgary.

Senator Patrick Burns was more than a man. To many he was an institution. He typified Western Canada in the minds of those to whom Calgary was but a name. He found Alberta the habitat of Indians and scattered beef herds. He lived to do more than one man's part in its upbuilding. He made employment for thousands, and left behind him a record for integrity which has seldom been equalled. His good works will live after him.

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Today we laid away the last of the great pioneers of Canada. His burial place was such as he himself would have chosen, just under the brow of the high hill that dominates the north-western corner of St. Mary's Cemetery. At the foot of the hill, directly in the valley below, lies Calgary, the city to which he came in its cow-town, rough-and ready days, half a century ago, and whose progress he had promoted to a greater extent than any one other man.

He was its first citizen by common consent of its lesser citizens, by length of residence, and by reason of the benefits he had conferred upon it.

To the right rise the tall buildings of the industry he founded and fostered, the largest and the economic mainstay of Calgary.

Above the trees marking the course of the Elbow River, rise the twin towers of St. Mary's cathedral, where he had worshipped ever since its construction, more than forty years ago.

A little farther to the north can be seen the red roof of the castellated stone residence where he lived and entertained his friends.

Thus lying at the foot of the spot where kindly Mother Earth has claimed him, cluster the visible evidence of his principal interests. Not all, however, because the mind and hand of this amazing man searched out where there was good to be done or an interest of his beloved West to be forwarded.

On Thursday morning, February 25th, the half-masted flag hoisted over the Calgary plant brought to us forcibly the arrival of the day which we had known could not be indefinitely delayed.

In the mid year of 1935 he was suddenly stricken with thrombusus, and the incandescence of that brilliant mind ceased to glow. The vocal chords were affected, and for a time he was as helpless as a child. Gradually his fighting spirit reasserted itself. He fought off disease, re-acquired the use of sufficient vocabulary to make known his wants. He re-acquired the use of his limbs, and with magnificent determination recommenced his daily rides in his car whenever weather permitted. He put on weight.

There was no longer present, the bodily strength, acquired in his youth on the old Ontario farm, on which his indomitable will might lean.

The closing days of his long reign were peaceful. Yielding to the inevitable, he no longer troubled himself with the cares of business. His chief delight in the past few months was his youngest grand-nephew, another little soul named for himself, who may one day grow up to carry on the work he must now lay down.

On Wednesday night it became apparent that the sands of life were running out, and that the end could not be much longer delayed. His household was summoned to his bedside; John Burns, his nephew and successor, on whose able shoulders his mantle had fallen since his retirement from active management of the Company; Mrs. Halliday, who had managed his household for thirty years; Dr. Scarlett, his physician; and his friend, Rt. Rev. Monsignor Smith, Rector of St. Mary's Cathedral.

And so, bearing as his passport the one thing a man can take with him, his mighty deeds of charity, his labors which had been so generously given to build up an empire and an industry that millions might follow him and prosper in the beautiful prairie country - Patrick Burns, poor farm boy, indomitable pioneer, empire builder, magnificent philanthropist, the creator of the largest packing industry in Canada, Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great, Knight of St. John of Jerusalem, with the simple child-like faith with which God had always animated him and

humanized his business life, passed over the border of the last mysterious frontier to meet his only son who had died during his own last illness, and who now lies by his side high on St. Mary's Hill.

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Twenty-two years ago I met him first. His vast enterprises were then just getting into their stride. He had passed through the pioneer stage of his career. The country was dotted with the evidence of his ability and his restlessness. Calgary was then the centre of his business, but he also had a well-equipped packing house in Vancouver, which has also retained its dominance at Canada's Pacific Gateway. The large packing house at Edmonton had just been opened.

The Great War had just smashed its way onto an unprepared world stage. The necessity for meeting national and imperial emergencies added the necessary incentive to start a program of development commensurate to the occasion, and to the development which he prophesied would follow.

The keynotes of his character, vision and decision, recognized the occasion and rose to meet it. With bloody terror sweeping over Europe and Britain threatened, troops must be fed at all costs. Patrick Burns was appointed by the British Government to organize the purchase of its beef supplies in America, and the trust was more than vindicated. To aid in meeting the emergency and to take care of subsequent trade, packing houses were purchased, rebuilt and modernized at Winnipeg, and Prince Albert. The poor farm boy of Kirkfield, Ontario, had arrived.

When P. Burns & Co., Limited, was sold in 1928 to the Dominion Securities Limited, of Toronto, to be re-incorporated and sold to the public, his business had grown to include 65 creameries, 11 wholesale branches, foreign branch offices in London, Liverpool and Tokyo, and two subsidiaries, Palm Dairies Limited and Consolidated Fruit Co., Limited, each the largest in its own field in Canada. The ranch properties, among which were famous ranches like the Bar U, the Willow Creek, the 44, the Bow Valley, and many others, were retained by him, and their operation became his chief concern.

One field of endeavor which Patrict Burns consistently shunned was politics. Every major party, completely deceived by his simple and unassuming exterior, would have profited by his wealth. All invitations to stand for elective office were gently but firmly refused. Nor did he until the Rt. Hon. R.B. Bennett, then Prime Minister of Canada, offered him a vacant senatorship for Alberta, as a mark of honor on his 75th birthday, assume any public office. This appointment established a new precedent in public affairs, as he was the first Liberal on record to be appointed by a Conservative Government to the Canadian Senate. Each year following his appointment, until his last illness, he attended its sessions.

One of the greatest of his many gifts was his uncanny appreciation of talent, and his ability to surround himself with men who could further his plans. Many of these men left his employ to assume public positions of importance, and even yet these men loom large in the minds of Calgary's citizens.

Senator Burns knew us all by our first and last names; his memory was uncanny.

His employees were privileged to deposit their surplus earnings with him at something more than bond interest rates, and evidences of thrift were marks that did not escape his attention. He had known poverty, and while he gave away as much as $60,000 in one year to worthy causes, principally the helping of others to help themselves, wastefulness and laziness were in his eyes two major crimes.

To his neighbors in his home village of Kirkfield, he was natural leader.

A guard of honor composed of many decorated officers of the 31st "Calgary" Regiment, of which he was the Honorary Colonel, did honor to him as he was borne to his last rest. In St. Mary's Cathedral during the solemn service which marked his last appearance before its altar were representatives of every major religious denomination in Calgary, every public body, every business competitor. The chief soloist in the choir was an internationally famous grand opera star who had been one of his proteges. In every heart in that vast throng was the thought expressed by Shakespeare:

> "His life was gentle, and the elements so mixed in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world: This was a man."

And as his casket was gently lowered into the lap of Mother Earth, every heart surrounding that grave sent up an answering echo to the prayer of the celebrant:-

Grant unto him eternal rest, O Lord, & let perpetual light shine upon him, May he rest in peace.

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Burns Obituary -7

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